

**Closing Remarks at the**  
***Stocktaking Conference on***  
***Palestinian Refugee Research***

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**Maureen O'Neil, President**  
**International Development Research Centre (Canada)**

When I welcomed you here two days ago, I told you that our objective was to take stock of the work that had already been accomplished on the refugee issue, to have some lively discussion and to identify work that we think is required in the future.

My thanks to all the presenters for their excellent presentations – and for mostly keeping within their time limits. Thanks also to the panel chairs who all did an excellent job. Congratulations for the challenging work that you have undertaken. Thanks also to you all for the spirited but measured tone of the debates on sensitive issues. I hope that you will agree that research and discussion can provide some clarity and direction on which to build for the future.

Equally, while we recognize that tremendous progress has been made in scoping and understanding some of the very important technical issues, we have also been reminded that there are sharply different “narratives” of the past and present, which lead to very different views of what the problem is, and what the solution can be. This is not surprising. But I was struck by Joel Peters’ remark about dialogue yesterday evening, which I will adapt to say that it is no good two sides talking together if they are not also listening to each other, learning from each others’ strongly held positions, and adapting, in some sense, to what they are hearing.

I would like very much to think that your research – providing as it does indications for the way forward – will be of use sooner rather than later. We will in any case ensure through the publication of all the papers and a report on the meeting that this work is taken into account.

As I told you, our overall aim is to generate knowledge and to increase capacity for policy planning and coordination on the refugee issue. The Expert and Advisory Services Fund, funded by CIDA and managed by IDRC, is dedicated to moving forward on the contentious issues in the Palestinian refugee file, even when the formal peace process is stalled. We hope that the last few days have made some contribution towards that.

One major objective was to find the research gaps and identify future research agendas and activities. I think that you have given us an enormous amount to think about as we plan future activities for the EASF. I hope also that you have gained much from the presentations, the exchanges, and the discussion here.

I would like to thank CIDA for providing most of the funding for the meeting, and DFAIT for funding our dinner at the National Arts Centre.

From DFAIT, particular thanks to Mike Molloy, who is retiring, Ernest Loignon, and Jonathan Laine. And renewed thanks through them to those working in the Canadian embassy in Tel Aviv and the representative office in Ramallah for their help.

From CIDA – particular thanks to our partners Mario Renaud, Adèle Shaughnessy, and Hélène Kadi.

Thanks to the rapporteurs: Kim Elliot, Cyrine Hashash, Joyce Patel, and Fawaz Salah.

Also, on your behalf, I would like to thank the IDRC staff who have worked tirelessly to make this event a success – Roula El Rifai, Michael Atallah, Claire Fitzpatrick, and Sherry Stevenson of the EASF, and Tim Dottridge, the director of Special Initiatives. Also IDRC's travel coordinator Angie Anton, our administrative and financial staff and, of course, Dawn Lucas and her staff here on the 14<sup>th</sup> floor who worked unobtrusively but effectively to give us food and drink to fuel our marathon discussions.

The last and most important thanks go you. Thanks to all of you for coming to the conference — for engaging in dialogue – of the listening kind, I hope.

Have a good trip home!